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“It is never easy to be a world-changer; they are often misunderstood in their generation. They go beyond conventional wisdom and follow the voice of God and their conscience. This book powerfully illustrates these truths and calls each of us to bold steps of obedience and perseverance.

The romance of life is not in the length of days lived, but in our steps of obedience that glorify God and make us all world-changers.”

Don Leetch and Dean Kerns

Founders, DaySpring Greeting Cards

As I sat and watched the movie *Amazing Grace*, I was captivated by the story of one individual with a passion to do what was right, in spite of a society that accepted injustice as a way of life, and in spite of repeated setbacks and disappointments. It is a powerful story of commitment, bravery, courage, and persistence. It is a story of the journey of one totally dedicated person making a significant difference in the world.

William Wilberforce struggled with whether, as a Christian, he could serve his Lord effectively in a secular job, or if he had to be in the ministry to live out his Christian faith. Through the encouragement of friends, he came to realize that we are all called to serve God no matter who we are, where we live, or what our occupation. His life is a testimony to living out our faith in the workplace today.

In the process, he had to change the minds and hearts of people that would cause a whole society to open up their eyes to both truth and injustice. As I left the theater that evening, I was inspired to be more of a difference-maker in my corner of the world.

You may say, “I am not William Wilberforce. He was a unique individual.” But remember that he was a human being just like you and me. He had the same doubts, the same sense of inadequacy, and the same fears, but he was driven by a purpose in life that was greater than himself. In many respects he was an ordinary person who cared more about others than he cared about himself; what a wonderful legacy he has left for us.

Have you ever stopped to ask yourself what is your purpose in life? What are you really passionate about? You may feel very ordinary, but I have seen ordinary people accomplish the extraordinary, even the impossible—far more than they ever dreamed or thought they could. Making a difference is what the Christian life is all about.

How do I do that in my life? That’s what this book does so well—it is a practical application of the principles of a world-changer that can be effectively applied in any life today. I believe you will find this book will inspire you to a deeper sense of commitment to being a world-changer and to accomplish all that God has prepared you for.

William Wilberforce did not do what he did as a lesson for us. He did it because he was following a higher calling, and in the process he has provided an exciting inspiration to us and a path that we can choose to follow. Let me encourage you to investigate that path.

—Don Soderquist,
Retired COO and Vice Chairman,
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

We would like to give special thanks to a few people that made this book a reality. First, we could not have made this happen without Patrick Kallestad (Walt's son and Bob's friend). Thanks for quarterbacking the project!

Tom Winters and Jeff Dunn were our agents on the project and really helped pull all the pieces together to get the book done. Chris Robinette, Kelly Nichols, and Jeremy Ennis went the extra mile to accomplish the publication of the book in "Guinness Book of Record" speed. Thank you Adam Palmer for taking our scattered thoughts and putting them down on paper—or binary code.

We are very grateful to Don Soderquist for believing enough in the entire World-Changer enterprise to encourage us and to write the Foreword.

Finally, you have heard it said that behind every successful man you will find a surprised mother-in-law. But the truth is, behind all our efforts in life and ministry we have two of the greatest women on the planet cheering us on: our wives!

Thanks Ali. Thanks Mary.

—*Walt & Bob*

CHAPTER ONE:

WHO IN THE WORLD IS WILLIAM WILBERFORCE?

I (Bob) don't really have an official title. The people who have titles came up with the term "Without Portfolio" to refer to us non-titled types. What I do is serve as an advisor for The Anschutz Corporation of Denver, Colorado. The Anschutz Corporation owns the filmmaking company Walden Media, and as an advisor, I do what I can to make sure our films live up to the overall vision and mission of our company. So when my boss said he wanted to do a film about the life of William Wilberforce, I was ecstatic. Walden and its sister company Bristol Bay Productions have been given the mission of making family-friendly movies that are uplifting, inspiring, and encouraging; movies that can be seen by the entire family without parents being embarrassed that their children are being exposed to vulgarity, immorality, and violence. The story of Wilberforce certainly lives up to that standard.

But beyond that, I knew that the story of William Wilberforce had the power to change people's lives. It wasn't just a nice story, or an uplifting story, or a heartwarming story—Wilberforce had such a monumental impact on history, I knew that, if we did the movie right, we could send people out of the theatre truly inspired.

And that became the film *Amazing Grace*.

But before the movie, there was a man. An ordinary, wild-haired, sickly, not-exactly-handsome man who was a member of the British Parliament. And this ordinary man stood on the floor of that Parliament one day and, after years and years of work, brought down the biggest giant England had ever seen: the slave trade.

Who was William Wilberforce, you ask? I asked the same question once. I was a pastor who decided to dig into the life of this regular guy to examine his impact on history. And the more I dug, the more I saw parallels between Wilberforce and our modern times.

Two hundred years, to the day, before our movie *Amazing Grace* released in theatres, William Wilberforce won an almost twenty-year battle against the slave trade in England. It's

impressive on its own, but let's put this in perspective, relative to our world today. Slavery back then wasn't just an accepted form of labor—it was an enormous economic force throughout the British Empire. So many people were making so much money on the sale of forced human labor that the slave trade was, essentially, the cornerstone of the English economy.

A good equivalent for today would be this: imagine leading a crusade, on your own, in Washington, D.C., to shut down the top one hundred corporations in America. Amazon.com, Coca-Cola, GM, Google—all the big ones, shut down for good.

That's what William Wilberforce did.

And he did it because of a grand conviction that slavery in itself was wrong. He was the man who popularized the truth that slaves are human beings, and therefore should not be oppressed through slavery. Oddly enough, this was a new idea in England in the late 1700s. We've come a long way since then, haven't we?

And we have Wilberforce to thank for it.

The man was, simply put, a world-changer.

But he was just one man, and he lived two hundred years ago. Plus, people like him are one in a million. And what he did was *so* extravagant, *so* enormous—there's no way anyone alive today can change the world the way he did. Right?

Not so fast.

As I lived with Wilberforce's story while developing *Amazing Grace*, I kept asking the question: what was it about this man? What did he have in his life that allowed him to do this? Was he an anomaly, or can we use some of the same tools he did and change our own world?

So I started to take apart Wilberforce's life and look deeply into it, and I found seven principles, seven character traits Wilberforce possessed that are available to us today. There are many parallels between his life and ours. Between the actions he took and the actions we can take. Between the disciplines he enacted and the disciplines we can enact.

And so that's what we're going to do in this book. We're going to examine the life of this extraordinarily ordinary man to uncover some truths about him, and in so doing, we just may uncover a few truths about ourselves.

Wilberforce and the Mount

There was another man who was a world-changer. A man who preceded William Wilberforce by about eighteen hundred years. A man who had such an impact on history that historians picked his birth to be the pivot, the shift, of the way we *record* history.

Of course, I mean Jesus of Nazareth.

As a pastor, I (Walt) have had the privilege of studying the life and words of Jesus as part

of my call for years. And the thing I love the most about it is that it never gets old. His words are so deep and rich that, though I have so many of them memorized, they still hold truth, power, and discovery.

Some of Jesus' most famous words come from what we call the Sermon on the Mount, found recorded in the gospel of Matthew. From chapter five through chapter seven, Jesus never stops talking, and each word we read drips with the wisdom of God Himself. I find myself hanging on every syllable, eager to find something new within those familiar phrases, and often doing just that.

It's amazing how well the Sermon on the Mount lines up with the life of William Wilberforce, almost as if the life of the British politician was based on this historical and world-changing treatise on blessings, the Law of Moses, murder, adultery, divorce, enemies, the poor, prayer, fasting, heavenly treasures, earthly treasures, anxiety, superiority complexes, heavenly gifts, narrow and wide gates, trees, fruit, foolishness, and wisdom.

It's deep, and it isn't for the faint of heart. Jesus dared to speak controversial things, just like Wilberforce would do later in history. He tackled the status quo and set some people straight, correcting a lot of half-truths and complete falsehoods they'd believed.

In addition to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke some strong words to his disciples about changing the world, words we find in the gospel of Matthew:

"...Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20, NLT)

Christians have historically looked at that passage of scripture and treated it as a call to evangelism, as a command to take the story of Jesus into the world around us. And it is that, unequivocally. But something else is there, underneath the surface, an implied encouragement that applies to every one of us.

Because with those words, Jesus was telling his disciples—and if you subscribe to his teachings, you are one of them—that they were world-changers. To take it a step farther, there's not a person alive who *can't* be a world-changer.

It's been estimated that less than 1% of the population of our planet shapes the circumstances, experiences, and culture of the other 99%. That is staggering proof that, indeed, there are very few world-changers *acting* today.

But how many world-changers have been lulled into inactivity?

How many world-changers are sitting at home today doing nothing, and as a result are completely unhappy in their lives?

How many world-changers are paying closer attention to their favorite sports team, or the latest blockbuster movie, or an internet chat room, or any of the thousands of other things in

this world that can occupy our time than to the needs of the world around them?

I believe each of us has the ability to be a world-changer. Wilberforce was a special man, but he isn't the only person ever to change the world. Jesus did it, and he said we can do it, too.

Along the way of studying Wilberforce's life, we're going to unpack Jesus' richly layered Sermon on the Mount to find how the words of Jesus line up with the life of our featured world-changer. I am confident we'll be more than a little surprised at what we find.

But I advise caution: once you read this book, you may wind up being a world-changer yourself. Accept the consequences if you dare. You've been warned.

It's All Ancient History

Probably the crucial question when speaking of both Wilberforce and Jesus is this: Isn't it all just ancient history? There's no one really doing any of that sort of thing today, is there?

Honestly, there is. As we explore the life of Wilberforce and the words of Jesus, we're going to offer a few stories from our lives and the lives of those we know to show you that world-changing moments are happening almost every day, in the here and now. They're happening in our lives, they're happening in our nation, they're happening around the world.

In fact, they're probably happening around you. You just aren't aware of it yet.

They've happened in recent history, and they'll happen in the near future.

They've been happening since the beginning of time, and they'll happen until time stops.

World-changing moments are always lurking around the corner, waiting for an opportunity to pounce. We're going to share a very few examples of people who've let those moments tackle them, and who seized them right back.

People who have changed the world.

People like Wilberforce. People like us.

People like you.

Let's get started.